

TRAIL & *Landscape*

A PUBLICATION CONCERNED WITH
NATURAL HISTORY AND CONSERVATION



TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

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THE OTTAWA FIELD-NATURALISTS' CLUB

- Founded 1879 -

President: Mr. Hue MacKenzie, 228 Royal Ave., Ottawa
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Objects of the Club: To foster an acquaintance with
and love of nature and to encourage and publish
original research in natural history.

Club Publications: THE CANADIAN FIELD-NATURALIST,
official journal of the Club, devoted to the
publishing of research in natural history.
TRAIL & LANDSCAPE, a non-technical publication
of general interest to local naturalists.

Field Trips, Lectures and other natural history
activities are arranged for local members.
See inside back cover.

Membership: Active membership (\$5 annual fee) includes
subscription to The Canadian Field-Naturalist. An
Associate membership (\$3 annual fee) is available to
local naturalists, entitling them to join in field
trips and similar Club activities. All Ottawa Valley
members, both Active and Associate, receive
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on request.

Application for Membership should be addressed to:
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TRAIL & Landscape

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THE OTTAWA FIELD-NATURALISTS' CLUB

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Members take note!

REVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE OTTAWA FIELD-NATURALISTS' CLUB

Since March 1968 the Council of the OFNC has had numerous meetings at which major revisions to the present Constitution of the Club have been drafted. Many vital sections such as the objectives of the Club, the types of membership and the fund structure, have been changed markedly. The amended Constitution is being published in the July-September issue of the Canadian Field-Naturalist. It is hoped that the full text of the revised draft will now be carefully studied by the membership. The revised Constitution will be presented at the Annual Business Meeting in December and must be approved by two-thirds of the voting members present in order to become valid. Any member who wishes to suggest further revisions or additions should bring these to the attention of Mr. Cody, our Business Manager, well in advance of the Annual Business Meeting so that adequate time for full discussion can be allotted. Changes can, however, be proposed during the meeting.

The reasons for revising the Constitution at this time are many. Perhaps the most important were to expand and clarify the objectives of the Club and to make the structure of membership more responsive to the needs of modern times. Many Club members felt that new and realistic ways had to be found to enable members to personally participate in the affairs of the Club and also in events which affect the quality of the natural environment, particularly in the Ottawa region. The new Constitution is a step in this direction. The revised objectives give our Club more flexibility to deal with the many new and special kinds of problems which are arising today but which simply did not exist only a decade ago. The disappearance of open space and natural beauty near many of our cities and towns, the gradual (and often needless) decrease in populations of certain species of birds and animals and of unique habitat types in various parts of Canada and the world --these and many other things too are affecting in a profound way the kinds of nature which people will be able to study and enjoy today and in the future.

In relation to these facts, the revised Constitution will not hinder a fuller participation of members, as naturalists and as citizens, in events which influence the quality of the natural world they seek to enjoy -- be those events in Gatineau Park or in some distant land.

Theodore Mosquin, Chairman
Constitutional Committee

GOODBYE, ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP! One constitutional change which will affect many T & L readers is the elimination of Associate membership. Under the present Constitution, Associates have no vote at the Annual Meeting, cannot hold office or become members of the Council. Those considering revisions felt that these restrictions created a second-class status for Associates which limited their participation in Club activity and denied them a part in decision-making. With adoption of the new Constitution every adult member will have full privileges.

The Council to be elected at the Annual Meeting must adopt new Bylaws in conjunction with the revised membership structure, to take effect in January, 1969. Bylaws cover fees, and publications to be received by members, and will largely affect the Associate member. The present Council has drafted new Bylaws. Within the Council, some feel that all members should receive both publications of the Club (T & L and The Canadian Field-Naturalist) and that one fee should be charged. Strong argument in favour of this scheme is the practical advantage of having only one membership and mailing list to deal with. Others in the Council are convinced that choice of publication(s), and a fee structure similar to the present one, would be favoured by the Associates and should be retained. Since Associates have no voice in this decision, your editors tried to put their case, as we saw it, before the Council, but lost by one vote!

We find it regrettable that no attempt was made by the Council to find out what the present non-voting members had to say about their future, before the Council decided it for them. The future of T & L, which was created for local amateur naturalists, may well depend on whether or not a majority of them stay with us.

Hawk Owl Observations



Dan Brunton

To many of us, the Hawk Owl that stayed at the Experimental Farm three years ago was the last one observable in the Ottawa area until the appearance of the Connaught Ranges bird on January 13, 1968. I went out to the Ranges, primarily to see that owl, but also hoping to retrieve some pellets and to take photographs of the bird.

On January 14, J. McCuaig, A. Sheppard and I drove to the site to study the owl. We found it after an hour or so, and began our observations by simply admiring this striking creature. As with the previous Hawk Owl, it couldn't have cared less about our presence. I was a little anxious that this indifference would spoil any experiments we had planned.

We tied a specimen skin of a Common Meadow Vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*) to a long white string (in theory the skin would appear more life-like since the colour of the string would make it invisible against the snow), and set out the "bait" in the snow. The skin was slightly covered with snow so that the bait would appear to pop out of the snow when pulled. I then positioned myself near the bait and J. McCuaig began to pull it under the owl's perch. Immediately, the Hawk Owl flew down and snatched up the bait! I was so surprised at these quick results that I neglected to take a picture! The owl attempted to fly off with

its "prey", but didn't realize that McCuaig was going to have something to say about that! There ensued a tug-of-war between the owl and McCuaig that lasted 8 to 10 seconds, after which the loser (owl) departed in disgust. It must have been astonished at the apparent strength of the mouse!

Twice more the Hawk Owl attacked the bait; every attack being very swift, noiseless and faultlessly accurate. By the third attack it had succeeded in ruining the specimen. In this last dive, it carried off a part of the specimen, inspected it and immediately rejected it. After this, it would have nothing to do with the tasteless and very un-mouse-like specimen!

Squeaking had very little effect on this bird for any prolonged period. (The Hawk Owl of 1965-66 would call immediately whenever squeaked at.) It did, however, respond to imitations of other owls. It became highly agitated when I imitated the Barred Owl, and was downright indignant when I gave the Screech Owl call! It would sway back and forth and bob its head rapidly from side to side in movements which I can only describe as "ogling". This was observed very clearly through a spotting 'scope at 25x.

Through all, the owl retained a form of restrained curiosity. To complicate matters further, two Hairy Woodpeckers were continuously diving at the owl and complaining loudly.

For velvet (if Mr. Bird will excuse my plagiarism of his expression) there is a final observation of the owl that is of note. As a measure of the degree to which birders value this bird, Mr. E.I. Stearns, of Westfield, New Jersey, flew here solely to see our bird. We were able to show it to him on January 20th; this was his 614th lifer!

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE!.... we present a list of "The Birds of the Ottawa Region", by Ron Pittaway. Leader of many OFNC field trips, Ron has kept in mind the needs of the inexperienced birdwatcher in compiling this information on the status and seasonal occurrence of all our birds.

W. G. Dore says...

A REMARKABLE PLANT -- THIS H E L L E B O R I N E !

In the last twenty years we have seen the rapid and widespread increase of the alien orchid Helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*), now the most frequently encountered orchid species in the Ottawa District (according to Ed Greenwood's tabulation in T & L 1:26-27, 1967).

In the spring of 1964, a single plant of Helleborine, consisting of three stems, suddenly appeared in my garden, among the radishes. While this newcomer was something of a surprise, the remarkable thing about it was that it broke its way up through the soil forcefully and grew straight into a vigorous, fully developed flowering plant, of the usual 18 inches height. It was certainly not a weak seedling or juvenile plant such as one might expect to see in its first year. Furthermore, I had to trowel down ten inches into the soil to get to its roots. Obviously, its presence had nothing to do with the radishes!

This spring, after a lapse of four years, the Helleborine appeared again, large-as-life - and in the exact same spot! The stems broke off at the same 10-inch depth. (The specimens of both plants - or, both specimens of the same plant - taken in the early-flowering stage, have been deposited in the herbarium at the Plant Research Institute, Ottawa, where they may be examined by anyone interested.)

What puzzles me, in addition to where the plant came from in the first place, is what happened with the Helleborine in the three seasons it did not appear above the surface of the garden soil? Ordinary herbs cannot perform in this way; either they spread their leaves to sunlight every year, or they die. Did a portion of the Helleborine mycorrhiza vegetate underground in some special way, gathering strength until again ready to spring to the surface as a full-grown insidious weed?



Perhaps it is some such special property that gives Helleborine its great success in the wild. From an examination of many specimens gathered locally from undisturbed woodland habitats, the stems always come up from a depth of at least four inches in the soil, sometimes from as deep as 12 inches. None of the plants had started from roots near the surface, where the minute wind-born seeds would have initially lodged!

Some of our rarer orchids, I think, particularly those of the chlorophyll-less sort, must behave in a similar intermittent way. You find them in bloom in some secluded site one year; the next year they are gone. (Don't tell me some undisciplined naturalist came along and pulled them all up!) We should mark the spot, and come back in a few years.

A LIST OF THE
FISHES OF THE OTTAWA AREA

D. E. McAllister, Curator of Fishes
National Museum of Natural Sciences
Ottawa

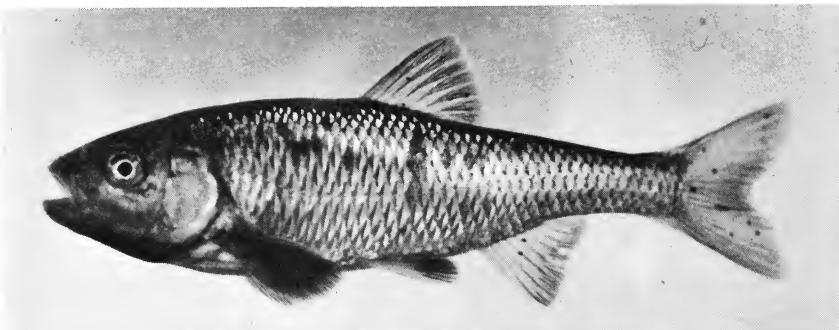
The waters of the Ottawa area support a rich and interesting fish fauna. In these waters are known 73 species in 22 families. Contributing to this richness is the variety of habitats: the warm, slow and turbid rivers of the more southerly areas; the cool, fast and clear streams of the Gatineau Hills; the shallow ponds, bogs and marshes; and the deep lakes.

Species are included on the basis of published reports and of specimens in the ichthyological collections of the National Museum of Natural Sciences. Listed are all those species of fishes known to live in Quebec and Ontario within a 30-mile radius of the Peace Tower of the Parliament Buildings. Eight of the species have not been previously reported within the 30-mile circle. The author is very grateful to R.L. Seguin for the inclusion of his record of Percina copelandi, and to R.E. Jenkins for Moxostoma carinatum.

The author would appreciate receiving specimens of those species whose presence is doubtful, of those which are unrepresented or poorly represented from the ichthyological collections, as indicated in the list, or of species not mentioned. (Phone 996-1755). Specimens may be frozen or preserved in formalin: see Methods of collecting and preserving vertebrate animals by R.M. Anderson (obtain from Queen's Printer).

The families are listed in phylogenetic order with the most primitive first. Within families the species are listed alphabetically by scientific name. Subspecific names are not included. English names are generally those in the American Fisheries Society A list of the common and scientific names of fishes from the United States and Canada. French names were courteously provided by M. Vianney Legendre, Service de la Faune du Québec.

Species may be identified using the keys and illustrations in Fishes of the Great Lakes region by Hubbs and Lagler (University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, Mich. 1964). It may be noted that their keys omit the Arctic charr. Information on life history, habitat and external appearance with excellent photos, and with keys to the Salmonidae and Cyprinidae may be found in Scott's Freshwater fishes of eastern Canada, (University of Toronto Press, Toronto; 1967); see review in Canadian Field-Naturalist 81(4):296, 1967. Keys and illustrations to the sport and commercial species will be found in Legendre's Key to the game and commercial fishes of the province of Quebec (Société Canadienne d'Écologie; 612 Université de Montréal, Montreal, P.Q.), while an excellent key to the minnows will be found in the same author's Clef des cyprinidés ou ménés du Québec (le Jeune Naturaliste 10(9/10), 1960; case postale 391, Joliette, P.Q.).



Common shiner, (Notropis cornutus)



Creek chub, (Semotilus atromaculatus)

Photos courtesy National Museum of Canada, Ottawa, Canada

A LIST OF THE FISHES OF THE OTTAWA AREA

? species whose presence is uncertain ! species previously unreported from the area
 * introduced species + species of which specimens are wanted

<u>Family</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>English Name</u>	<u>French Name</u>
PETROMYZONTIDAE	+ <u>Ichthyomyzon unicuspis</u> Hubbs and Trautman	silver lamprey	lamproie argentée
ACIPENSERIDAE	<u>Acipenser fulvescens</u> Rafinesque	lake sturgeon	esturgeon de lac
LEPISOSTEIDAE	<u>Lepisosteus osseus</u> (Linnaeus)	longnose gar	lépisostée osseux
AMITIDAE	? <u>Amia calva</u> Linnaeus	bowfin	poisson-castor
HIODONTIDAE	<u>Hiodon tergisus</u> Lesueur	mooneye	laquaiche argentée
SALMONIDAE	+ <u>Coregonus artedii</u> Lesueur + <u>Coregonus clupeaformis</u> (Mitchill) * <u>Salmo gairdneri</u> Richardson * <u>Salmo trutta</u> Linnaeus + <u>Salvelinus alpinus</u> (Linnaeus) <u>Salvelinus fontinalis</u> (Mitchell) + <u>Salvelinus namaycush</u> (Walbaum)	lake cisco lake whitefish rainbow trout brown trout Arctic charr brook charr (trout) lake charr (trout)	cisco de lac corégone bossu truite arc-en-ciel truite brune omble chevalier omble de fontaine touladi
OSMERIDAE	<u>Osmerus eperlanus</u> Linnaeus	rainbow smelt	éperlan arc-en-ciel

ESOCIDAE pikes; brochets	<u><i>Esox lucius</i></u> Linnaeus + <u><i>Esox masquinongy</i></u> Mitchill	northern pike muskellunge	grand brochet maskinongé
UMBRIDAE mudminnows: umbres	<u><i>Umbrä limi</i></u> (Kirtland)	central mudminnow umbre de vase	
CYPRINIDAE minnows; ménés	<u><i>Chrosomus eos</i></u> Cope <u><i>Chrosomus neogaeus</i></u> (Cope) !* <u><i>Cyprinus carpio</i></u> Linnaeus <u><i>Hybognathus hankinsonii</i></u> Hubb <u><i>Hybognathus nuchalis</i></u> Agassiz <u><i>Notemigonus crysoleucus</i></u> (Mitchill) <u><i>Notropis atherinoides</i></u> Rafinesque <u><i>Notropis cornutus</i></u> (Mitchill) <u><i>Notropis heterodon</i></u> (Cope) <u><i>Notropis heterolepis</i></u> Eigenmann and Eigenmann <u><i>Notropis hudsonius</i></u> (Clinton) <u><i>Notropis rubellus</i></u> (Agassiz) <u><i>Notropis stramineus</i></u> (Cope) <u><i>Notropis volucellus</i></u> (Cope) <u><i>Pimephales notatus</i></u> (Rafinesque) <u><i>Pimephales promelas</i></u> Rafinesque <u><i>Rhinichthys cataractae</i></u> (Valenciennes)	northern redbelly dace ventre rouge du nord finescal dace carp carp brassy minnow silvery minnow golden shiner emerald shiner common shiner blackchin shiner blacknose shiner spottail shiner rosyface shiner sand shiner mimic shiner bluntnose minnow fathead minnow museau noir queue à tache noire tête rose méné paille méné pâle ventre pourri tête-de-boule naseux de rapides	
	<u><i>Semotilus atromaculatus</i></u> (Mitchill) <u><i>Semotilus corporalis</i></u> (Mitchill) <u><i>Semotilus margarita</i></u> (Cope)	creek chub fallfish pearl dace	mulet à cornes quitouche mulet perlé

CATOSTOMIDAE suckers; meuniers	+ <u><i>Carpiodes cyprinus</i></u> (Lesueur)	quillback	couette
	+ <u><i>Catostomus catostomus</i></u> (Forster)	longnose sucker	meunier rouge
	<u><i>Catostomus commersonii</i></u> (Lacépède)	white sucker	meunier noir
	+ <u><i>Moxostoma anisurum</i></u> (Rafinesque)	silver redhorse	suceur blanc
	+ <u><i>Moxostoma carinatum</i></u> (Cope)	river redhorse ¹	suceur ballot ¹
	+ <u><i>Moxostoma erythrurum</i></u> (Rafinesque)	golden redhorse	suceur doré
	+ <u><i>Moxostoma macrolepidotum</i></u> (Lesueur)	northern redhorse	suceur rouge
	+ <u><i>Moxostoma valenciennesi</i></u> Jordan	greater redhorse	suceur jaune
	! ? <u><i>Ictalurus natalis</i></u> (Lesueur)	yellow bullhead	barbotte jaune
	<u><i>Ictalurus nebulosus</i></u> (Lesueur)	brown bullhead	barbotte brune
ICTALURIDAE catfishes; barbottes	<u><i>Ictalurus punctatus</i></u> (Rafinesque)	channel catfish	barbue de rivière
	! <u><i>Noturus flavus</i></u> Rafinesque	stonecat	barbotte des rapides
	<u><i>Noturus gyrinus</i></u> (Mitchill)	tadpole madtom	chat-fou brun
	<u><i>Anguilla rostrata</i></u> (Lesueur)	American eel	anguille d'Amérique
ANGUILLIDAE eels; anguilles		burbot	lotte
	<u><i>Lota lota</i></u> (Linnaeus)		
GADIDAE cods; morhues			
PERCOPSIDAE trout-perches; omiscos	<u><i>Percopsis omiscomaycus</i></u> (Walbaum)	trout-perch	omisco
CYPRINODONTIDAE killifishes; cyprinodontes	<u><i>Fundulus diaphanus</i></u> (Lesueur)	banded killifish	fondule barré
ATHERINIDAE silver- sides; poissons d'argent	<u><i>Labidesthes sicculus</i></u> (Cope)	brook silverside	crayon d'argent

¹ Identified for the first time from the Ottawa area by R.E. Jenkins

CENTRARCHIDAE	<u>Ambloplites rupestris</u> (Rafinesque)	rock bass	crapet de roche
sunfishes; achiigans	<u>Lepomis gibbosus</u> (Linnaeus)	pumpkinseed	crapet-soleil
+ <u>Lepomis macrochirus</u>	Rafinesque	bluegill	crapet à oreilles bleues
			achigan à petite bouche
	<u>Micropterus dolomieu</u> Lacépède	smallmouth bass	achigan à grande bouche
	<u>Micropterus salmoides</u> (Lacépède)	largemouth bass	marigane noire
	<u>Pomoxis nigromaculatus</u> (Lesueur)	black crappy	
PERCIDAE	<u>Etheostoma exile</u> (Girard)	Iowa darter	dard à ventre jaune
perches; perches	+ <u>Etheostoma flabellare</u> Rafinesque	fantail darter	dard barré
	<u>Etheostoma nigrum</u> Rafinesque	Johnny darter	raseux-de-terre
	! <u>Etheostoma olmstedi</u> (Storer)	tessellated darter	dard tessellé
	<u>Perca fluviatilis</u> Linnaeus	yellow perch	perchaude
	<u>Percina caprodes</u> (Rafinesque)	logperch	dard-perche
	!+ <u>Percina copelandi</u> (Jordan)	channel darter ²	dard gris ²
	+ <u>Stizostedion canadense</u> (Smith)	sauger	doré noir
	<u>Stizostedion vitreum</u> (Mitchill)	walleye	doré jaune
	+ <u>Aplochitonotus grunniens</u> Rafinesque	freshwater drum	malachigan
SCIAENIDAE			
drums; tambours			
COTTIDAE	<u>Cottus bairdii</u> Girard	mottled sculpin	chabot tacheté
sculpins; chabots	+ <u>Cottus cognatus</u> Richardson	slimy sculpin	chabot visqueux
GASTEROSTEIDAE	<u>Culaea inconstans</u> (Kirtland)	brook stickleback	épinooche à cinq épines
sticklebacks;	+ <u>Gasterosteus aculeatus</u> Linnaeus	threespine stickleback	épinooches à trois épines
épinooches	<u>Pungitius pungitius</u> (Linnaeus)	ninespine stickleback	épinooche à neuf épines

2Unpublished record by R. L. Seguin

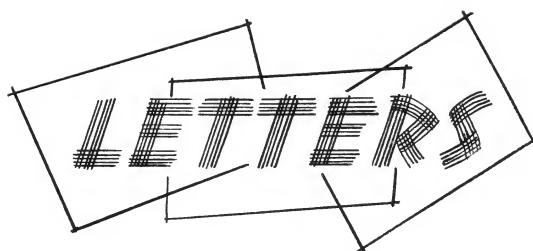




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M. M. Sweers



Editor, T & L

As a visitor to Canada and a relatively recent recruit to the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club it is perhaps premature for me to comment on my reactions to Canadian wildlife and the steps being taken to preserve it. However, I shortly return to England, with much sadness at the prospect of leaving this wonderful natural heritage behind me, and I feel I must briefly express my feelings.

Naturally, during my first year here, Canada has been a novelty. I have been fortunate enough to travel extensively both in the Maritime Provinces in the east, across the Prairies to Vancouver in the west and locally in the Ottawa district, and everywhere the vastness of this land and its natural resources have overwhelmed me. I have experienced each season of the extreme and exciting climate, with all the beauties of a cold winter and the comforts of a hot summer, the brilliance of the fall and the bursting of the spring. I have seen the rich variations of topography, the fauna and the flora, all so different from those to which I am accustomed. And, far less pleasant but most important to mention, I have seen and heard about the threats to this heritage which are assailing it on all sides and which if unchecked will sweep away for ever many priceless portions of it.

It is on the last score that I am therefore so relieved to see the steps being taken by organizations such as yourselves, to make the public and government alike aware of the dangers to our natural environment and the need for prompt and effective conservation measures based on proper understanding and study and on wise counselling. And, most important of all, I am heartened to see the enthusiasm with which the organisers and members of the OFNC are tackling the problems and spreading the gospel of conservation through the pages of newsletter and journal. This last task is

one of the most vital, and yet to my mind, even in this dynamic country, there is not enough advertisement given to environmental and wildlife conservation in the national press, radio and television to ensure the prevention of future disasters. It is surely imperative that big and wealthy nations take the lead in this vital field.

Nevertheless, despite national shortcomings, organizations such as the OFNC are doing a grand job and using their influence to the full. I trust that your efforts will be rewarded with enhanced support and cohesion across the nation and I shall continue to do my own small bit by continuing my membership. It has been a tremendous pleasure to meet many of you and to share the enjoyment of your beautiful countryside with you, and until I return I shall follow your progress with the greatest attention and interest.

Rally round, OFN's! and good luck in your ideals and aspirations.

Christopher Marchant
Plant Research Institute
Experimental Farm, Ottawa

Editor, T & L

In case you didn't already know, I thought I should tell you how much aesthetic pleasure we derive from each issue of Trail & Landscape.

The layouts are so pleasing, and the typing, drawings and photographs are so beautifully done and perfectly reproduced, that they are a delight to behold. I should add that we find the contents a delight to the mind as well!

(Mrs. W.A.) Elizabeth Alexander
RR 2, Cumberland, Ont.

A MOCKINGBIRD'S NEST FORTY MILES FROM OTTAWA

Marguerite Sweers

The Events

On June 30 this year a pair of mockingbirds showed us their nest five miles west of Lac Lapeche: the first record of a nest in the Ottawa area. In flight, the male showed himself to be a Mockingbird by his generally shrike-like coloration, but with conspicuous white patches on the wings and a strikingly long tail. Looking at the bird perched on a fence, we noted its slender catbird-like build and the white edges of the tail. Coming close to it, I could even see the yellow eyes, which had appeared dark from a distance. Other distinctions were the two white wing bars and the absence of a black shrike mask. In size it was between a Catbird and a Brown Thrasher.

Now we detected the female too, recognizable as such by smaller size and less distinct pattern. She flew in and out of a low, rather isolated hawthorn shrub at the roadside. The male joined her and both began a scolding act, fluttering around this shrub and perching nervously on a nearby fencepost for short whiles. Then the male began a decidedly aggressive display on the wing, making the most of its flashing white wing patches and the white on the now fanned tail. His threats failed to bring effective results, however, and he did not deliver actual attacks on the intruder, which I found to be a chipmunk. The robber sat motionless in the Mockingbird nest, having damaged one egg already. Upon seeing me he hurried off into the undergrowth.

The nest contained three undamaged eggs. The fourth, broken, was apparently fresh since the yolk didn't show blood spots yet. We tried to collect it, but it crumbled upon handling. The eggs looked just as described in "The Birds of Canada": pale bluish or greenish blotched and spotted with browns. After taking photos we left because the adults were very shy.

On July 1 we returned with Harry and Sheila Thomson to confirm the observation. To our surprise, the chipmunk had not returned, for the three eggs were intact.

Harry took a picture and we returned to the car, some distance away. The adults, who had been flying nervously in the neighbourhood, took considerable time to settle down, but when we saw the female slip into their shrub we felt satisfied and left. Because of their shyness and the exposure of the nest I abandoned plans to return later for a behaviour study.

Our next visit was early on July 7 before traffic was flowing. We waited at a safe distance from the nest for the adults to show, staying in the car all the time. When there were still no mockingbirds after 20 minutes, we had a look at the nest. The eggs were gone and the undergrowth all around the bush was trampled. There appears little doubt that human interference was responsible for the untimely end of the nesting effort. The saddest part is that we could detect no sign of the mockingbirds themselves although we spent much time searching the neighbourhood. We tried again on July 21, for several hours, but with the same negative result.

Habitat of the Nesting Area

Dry pasture with gliding hills, cut by a sandy gravel road with much more traffic than the number of abandoned farms and churches would let you expect. The road edges are sandy with sparse *Silene* and other weed growth; they rise in 3 to 4 foot embankments with a dense cover of tall grasses, milkweeds and locally some low bushes, more often than not young hawthorns.

The mockingbirds had chosen a group of three such hawthorns. The nest was only 2 feet above ground in a 5-foot bush. The immediate environs were treeless except for a large pine across the road. A hundred yards from the nest there was a hardwood grove with very dense thickets of various shrubs. In the fenced-off pasture directly behind the nest a large herd of cows grazed, so here the grass was kept short. We saw no cattle in neighbouring fields where, consequently, the vegetation was high but for some sandy areas on a hillside.

How open these pastures are is suggested by the list of birds observed: many Savannah Sparrows and Meadowlarks, some Vespers, the odd Killdeer and Horned Lark, a family of Kestrels and (twice) a hunting Marsh Hawk. Unexpected neighbours for a Mockingbird!

The Nest

The nest consisted of two layers. The inner one was compact, built from coarse lumps of small roadside weeds, their roots and stems, a few dry leaves and intertwined dry grasses. In this layer I recognized a sizable part of a *Potentilla* plant, with even part of the root system. The nest cup proper - $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches deep, 3 inches diameter - was lined neatly and homogeneously with rootlets and a few strands of snowwhite fibers. These strands were up to 7 inches long and looked to me like strips of milkweed bark that were torn off by the birds (or bird) and ripped with the bill into very fine fibers. There was no down in the lining of the cup; no feathers at all in the whole nest.

The outer layer of the nest was a bulky framework of twigs, hawthorn mainly, held together by the latter's long thorns. The birds had not bothered to intertwine the twigs but had merely laid them in place, straight and stiff as they were. This layer rapidly disintegrated after collection of the nest. In it I recognized twigs of white pine, dogwood, elm, hawthorn, part of a vine and some unidentified weed parts.



HABITAT OF THE MOCKINGBIRD

At left the hawthorn in which the mockingbirds nested

M. M. Sweers

Remarks

Mockingbirds are southerners; resident from northern and north-central United States, south to the Gulf of Mexico; recently spreading slowly northward into Canada. Earl Godfrey states that they are known to have nested, among other provinces, in southern Ontario (Amherstburg, Manitoulin Island) and southwestern Quebec (Como, Tadoussac). He reports them as rare or casual in central and northern Ontario. (The Birds of Canada, 1966).

I believe that the few observations in the Ottawa area concerned only single birds. It would be interesting to know if the pair in question wandered northward as a pair or separately. If the latter was the case, how long did it take them to find a partner? Note how late June 30 is for a new nest. It could be that this was a second bid. I wonder too whether the wandering individuals are last summer's young with no set territory of their own where they came from.

In any case, it seems to me that this couple picked a poor spot for a nest, where it was almost bound to be spotted by human or animal robbers. In these open fields the large, light-coloured Mockingbirds were quite conspicuous as they flew about, perched on fence posts or occasionally dashed to open sandy spots by the road to feed. Moreover, according to Earl Godfrey, a Mockingbird's nest is usually between 4 and 20 feet up in a shrub, tree or vine (*ibid*). The scattered shrubs along the roadside simply were not mature enough to provide for nesting sites more than 2 or 3 feet high.

After finding the nest robbed we made a thorough search of the nearby hardwood grove, where the adults had often retreated when their territory was intruded. We found at least 15 species of trees and shrubs in a real wilderness of raspberry canes and tall ferns, and entanglements of old hawthorns that formed inaccessible shrubbery many feet high. There was another such hawthorn tangle in the cow-grazed pasture bordering this woodlot. To human eyes the place seemed ideal habitat for Mockingbirds. We did see Catbirds and a Brown Thrasher there among a variety of other birds. It even appears that the mockers got part of their building material from here, which makes it all the more strange to me that they chose the pasture for nesting!



Anna setting trap
outside cabin...



.... and waiting
for customers



from
colour photos by
Rosemary Gilliat

GREENHORN IN THE WOODS

Rosemary Gilliat

Part I: Birds in Hand and Bush

In 1953, skiing near Fortune Lake, Anna Brown and I were accosted by a small bird which chittered at us expectantly, so we undid a pack and offered it sandwich crumbs. Anna said it was a chickadee. Having lived mainly in cities I could just tell a pigeon from a starling - so I took her word for it. But I found this a remarkable experience: to see a wild bird actually fly towards us and perch on our hands.

Next year we were fortunate in renting the rather dilapidated log cabin called Shilly-Shally where we stayed every winter weekend. At first we spent much time skiing, acquiring a wood pile and fixing up the cabin, so weathered that it blended into the woods. People often passed without seeing it and the wildlife was used to it. Like other Park tenants, we put out suet and seed all winter to attract birds. We soon realized that a great deal was going on around us.

Anna, having had a country childhood, knew many birds. She was a biologist and with one of her first cheques earned in Ottawa she had bought field glasses and gone on OFNC bird walks. No one in my family or at school had ever taken me into the country and said, "Look" or told me the names of living things. For me, porcupines shot quills, birds lived in nests, wolves ate people. Here at the cabin, with Anna's help, my tardy education in natural history began.

My first big excitement was early one morning when Anna whispered urgently "Oh LOOK what we've got!" Well, everyone knows an Evening Grosbeak, but I had never seen one and was dazzled by those exotic golden birds feeding in the snowy woods. We had put food on the ledges under the cabin windows to lure birds right up to our eyes.

During our first spring I was as emerald green as a greenhorn could be and wondered innocently one April morning why so many motorcycles were starting up in the bush. Having ridden pillion on motorbikes, I frankly disbelieved Anna when she said it was a Ruffed Grouse

drumming. And I spent hours searching trees for that elusive peeping bird that was a frog. Under Anna's tuition I got to know the obvious birds but it wasn't until she loaned me her field glasses that it dawned on me you couldn't really SEE a bird without them, and I realized what a blinkered life I had led.....

Each winter the birds got tamer. The chickadees, having been fed by earlier tenants, would follow us on skiing trips so we carried sunflower seeds in our pockets. It was pleasant to be welcomed home by chickadees flying toward us - and who could fail to be charmed by companionable birds escorting one to the outhouse. It may not be right to tame wild birds or animals, but it just happened. Having watched the amazed delight of children on seeing a wild bird perch on their hands for the first time, I feel it may not be such a bad thing - if an interest in wildlife brushed off on some of them. The visitor's book records children's comments: "I like to feed the birds" "I was happy every minute" "I wish I was a chickadee". The woodpeckers allowed photographers to come pretty close; White-breasted Nuthatches, bold enough to drive a squirrel off the bird table, were shy of people. One or two would accept seeds from your hand if you laid it against a tree, and they too would follow us through the woods.

One Christmas Day I was standing outside the cabin with a handful of seeds for the chickadees when a Red-breasted Nuthatch landed on my thumb, tried out a few seeds for weight and flew off with the best one. Soon it was back for more. In time it became aggressive and drove off other birds with a rasping cry - quite unlike its usual soft "quank". Once I had two of these nut-hatches on my hand with a third waiting for landing room. Except for their needle claws I could hardly feel them, they were as light as a puff of wind.

We began to wonder just how many birds visited the cabin regularly. The clouds of birds hanging around caused a passing New Canadian to ask, "You have some bird-farm here?" Anna obtained instruction in bird-banding and a licence. A friend helped build a drop-trap which could be operated from inside the cabin - an advantage since the best time for banding was at dawn when the birds were hungriest and the mercury often at its sub-zero lowest. I was a bit dubious about the



"I like to feed the birds"



Red-breasted Nuthatch and friend



Banded chickadee takes a sunflower seed from ledge near cabin

Photos by Rosemary Gilliat

project, thinking it might scare off our friendly birds; in fact they were often back feeding under the trap within minutes of banding. Woodpeckers and chickadees were easy game; Blue Jays and White-breasted Nuthatches were harder to catch, and the Brown Creeper shyest of all - it didn't want to leave its familiar tree trunk. Anna had to move her trap to cover an exposed tree root and lure the bird under with a trail of seed, meanwhile shooing other eager birds out of the cage. In the hand this dull bird gave an impression of extreme delicacy; we wondered at its hair-thin legs, slender downcurved bill and bright mottling of its treetrunk-coloured back.

During the winters of 1957 and 1958 Anna banded (at our own and nearby cabins) 12 Blue Jays, 32 Hairy Woodpeckers, 14 Downy Woodpeckers, 40 Black-capped Chickadees, 6 White-breasted Nuthatches, 2 juncos and 1 Brown Creeper. The project ended when Anna moved to B.C. One chickadee which she banded in 1958 was caught in the Gatineau in 1963; the most recent report was of two banded chickadees seen but not caught there in the winter of 1966/67.

In the silent winter woods even the sound of a swooping wing seemed loud, so when a Pileated Woodpecker began machine-gunning holes in a dead tree the peace was really shattered. At 2:30 one morning I was awakened by a sudden thump and looked out to see a dim shape on the bird table. I thought it was a porcupine - but the porcupine spread its wings and sailed off into the night. It must have been an owl striking at a mouse.

Once we heard chatty noises and crept out to see two courting Barred Owls, side by side on a branch in brilliant moonlight. After watching a while we switched on a light which scared one owl away, but the other swivelled its head in that improbable way and stared back at us. We often heard the calls of these owls and were intrigued by the variety in the voices of individuals. Our researches were confused by a particular owl that hooted on an unfamiliar note. Puzzled, we peered and listened - to discover a Thomson's Owl. Harry Thomson had crept up on us, hoo-hooing from behind a stump. Skiing home by starlight the following weekend we heard a repeated hooting near the trail and jeered loudly, "OK, Harry, you can't fool us this time!" and must have scared a genuine Barred Owl half out of its wits.

Spring brought new sounds every weekend. A deluded early crow battered its reflection in the cabin window, and sleeping guests leapt aghast from their bunks when a woodpecker hammered its electrifying love calls on the stove pipe. By April the snow had gone from the hill behind the cabin, trout lilies speared the flattened cover of dead leaves, and hepaticas flowered. The ground was alive with juncos and sparrows, all hopping and fossicking in the warm sunshine. Chickadees were no longer interested in humans.

The grandest sight I can remember at the cabin was staged one April evening in the theatrical light of a sinking sun. Two male Pileated Woodpeckers were acting up - just as Hairies do in the spring, only this was on such a magnificent scale. The great birds clucked angrily, stretching out their necks with crests blazing, and chased each other up and around a dead pine. Then they were joined by two females.....and if anyone thinks this greenhorn was being gulled by four ravens - witnesses can be produced.

May starred the hill with trilliums and the bush echoed with the songs of Veeries, Hermit Thrushes and unseen Ovenbirds. The temperature shot up and bursting leaves hid the flittering warblers which I still found pretty baffling even in spring plumage. Speeded on our way by mosquitoes and black flies which pittered like rain on our parka hoods, we closed the cabin, rather sadly, until the fall....when anyone is entitled to be confused by warblers.

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O F N C COMING EVENTS

arranged by the Excursions and Lectures Committee;
E. W. Greenwood, Chairman

Sunday 3 November BIRDS IN LATE AUTUMN
" 10 " Dependent on good weather
" 17 " Meet: Restaurant, Shirley's Bay
Time: 9:00 a.m.
Leaders: various

Saturday 9 November WHAT'S TO SEE IN THE GATINEAU
An all-day trip to Gatineau Park ending with a walk
over the Skyline Trail. Dress warmly and bring lunch.
Meet: Health & Welfare Bldg.
Time: 9:00 a.m.
Leader: Bill Holland

Saturday 30 November EARLY WINTER BIRDS
An all-day trip, dawn to dusk, Ottawa - Shawville -
Otter Lake - Lac Osborne - Eagle Depot - Lac
Cayamant - Ottawa.

Meet: Health & Welfare Bldg.
Time: 7:00 a.m.
Leader: Monty Brigham

The trip will be cancelled only if it is snowing
heavily or driving conditions are dangerous.

Monday 9 December O F N C ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING
The meeting will include the election of officers for
1969, the annual report for 1968, and voting on the
new OFNC Constitution. The reports will include that
of the OFNC Native Orchid Location Survey, illustrated
with colour slides.

Place: Auditorium, National Museum
Time: 8:00 p.m.

Please attend and vote

Saturday 21 December CHRISTMAS BIRD CENSUS
OR Note: if Boxing Day is declared
Thursday 26 December a public holiday, the Census will
be held that day.
Organizer: George McGee

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